

# **Politics of care and compassion. Civic help for refugees and its political implications in Hungary – a mixed-methods approach**

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## **Introduction**

This chapter focuses on philanthropic aid provided to refugees crossing Hungary between the spring and autumn of 2015. Even though the public space (national and local media, newspapers, television, social media, physical public spaces, etc.) in the respective period was pervaded by a securitization discourse controlled and initiated by the Hungarian government, humanitarian responses also emerged. A significant number of individuals as well as formal and informal institutions offered donations and volunteer work to provide for the basic physical needs of refugees; moreover, large segments of the population were supportive of these actions and regarded the efforts of volunteers and other philanthropic actors with sympathy.

Through research carried out at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (Centre for Social Sciences, Institute for Minority Studies) between October 2015 and January 2016 we sought to describe and understand this humanitarian perspective and the relationship of Hungarian society to it using both qualitative and quantitative methods. Thirty-two interviews were conducted among volunteers active in organizing philanthropic/charity help for refugees/migrants, while the attitudes of the Hungarian population were investigated using a nationally representative sample (N=1000). The aim of the current paper is to elaborate the relationship between civic helping and politics. Using our interview data typical modalities of the relationship between philanthropic actions and public engagement are identified in the context of the narrated targets of civic aid activism, the normative justification for care activity, as well as the effects of concrete instances of interaction between help providers and receivers. Based on our population survey, the structural background factors (including political party support) behind typical attitudes to offering civic help to refugees, as well as the relation of the latter to satisfaction with securitizing political actors, is presented.

In this paper we claim that, besides an identifiable tendency to depoliticization, a strong positive relationship between the two spheres (charity and politics) may also be unfolded. Dedication to charity activities (among volunteers) and strong symbolic support for such activities (among the wider population) are closely associated with political attitudes; i.e., they indicate reflection on and evaluation of public actors and public causes. Furthermore, the paper identifies a dialectical relationship between charity and politics. This entails on the one hand a process of increasing public awareness and responsibility implied by (actual or symbolic) charity activities that we

call the *politicization of charity*. On the other hand, charity activism in support of refugees appears to be a novel form of giving voice to positions concerning political actors and political responses to the so-called refugee crisis; this we call the *charitization of politics*.

Our claims are confirmed by a mixed-methods approach built on qualitative interview analysis, as well as on the statistical analysis of the population survey, the results being presented in subsequent chapters of this paper. After a theoretical introduction, in the first part of the paper interview data reflecting the intentional goals and targets of actions, legitimizing ideologies and interactions that occurred are described, while conclusions are based on factor analysis that validates claims to the existence of three co-occurring perceptions of care and politics in the context of helping actions.

In the second part of the paper we analyse the relationship between attitudes towards helping refugees and political attitudes in a broader context among the Hungarian population. Linear regression models are described to expose how attitudes towards charity activities are related to political attitudes: namely, to overall party-preferences, as well as to satisfaction with the reactions of specific political actors to the so-called refugee crisis.

## **Civic helping and politics**

The relationship between (civic) helping and politics, and specifically the effects of helping on politics, has been theorized in numerous ways. A large body of literature assigns a key role to volunteering, philanthropy and charity in making democracies work, these institutions being understood as part of civil society and forming the core terrain for democratic political socialization and political engagement in which the know-how of democratic communication can be learnt, practiced and incorporated (Arato 2000), and trust and social capital acquired (Putnam 2000)<sup>1</sup>. In opposition to such a strong normative dedication to the civic/third/nonprofit/voluntary field (and within it, to volunteering, philanthropic and charity actions), numerous other models that shed a critical light on these helping activities regarding their political implications also exist.

A wide palette of critical perspectives from anthropology, sociology and social theory associate charity, philanthropy, and volunteering with consequences labelled ‘apolitical’, ‘anti-politics’, or ‘depoliticisation’. Some critiques link these effects to the elevated role of emotions such as compassion, and are closely interlinked with the issues associated with the privatization of responsibilities and a disregard for state-assigned rights (Ticktin 2011); others direct attention to the depoliticizing effects of making human suffering the focal point – as opposed to structural and historical relations, subjectivity and political agency (Fassin 2012, Malkki 2015); postcolonial perspectives emphasize the potential of benevolent (North-South) philanthropic activities for maintaining the social status quo through epistemic violence, while Bourdieusian approaches describe the maintenance of social hierarchies through benevolent action that reproduces symbolic capital, just to list a few of the related critiques.

Among these different critical streams, one characteristic common to how the term ‘political’ is approached is through a reflection on responsibilities, conflicts and agency related to the problems under investigation, and the capacity to encompass and integrate a complex net of connections and interactions among different actors into everyday epistemology. Thus, the ‘a/de/anti’ terms may refer to charity, philanthropy, and volunteering as operating along narrow societal models, involving only the binary roles of helpers and the helped, and disregarding, for example, political, economic or other causal mechanisms behind the suffering addressed. Such blindness about complex interconnections and responsibilities are often linked in some way to the assumed emotional, cognitive and practical attributes of helping (interactions, discourses and institutions): a focus on suffering, needs and disadvantages, the emotional management of compassion and empathy, and actual short-term, problem-solving tasks and practices are all regarded by these critiques as hindering the development of detailed abstract models about wider (often global) interconnections.

In opposition to the above mentioned analyses that solely emphasize the aforementioned shortcomings of the political potential of charity and philanthropy, sociological attempts allow for more diverse linkages to be made between the realm of benevolent action and the political epistemologies of helpers. Concerning volunteering, Nina Eliasoph (2013) formulates her definition of ‘political’ by pointing to the importance of expanding networks of responsibilities, and the need to identify complex causal models of human actors – on the widest scale possible – when conceptualising a social problem. Besides emphasizing the need for abstract models, she also highlights – following the classical political philosophers of civil society – the importance of the public. It is not just the construction and enlargement of abstract models, but doing this through interaction and attempting to influence larger audiences that is also central for such actions to become ‘political’.

Eliasoph’s reasoning favours a dynamic approach, which, instead of juxtaposing ‘volunteering/charity’ and ‘political activism’ recognises the dialectic relationship between immediate action taken to alleviate suffering and the construction of abstract models of interconnected actors. From this perspective, quoting Joan Tronto, she concludes that: “...an observer who wants to understand what makes any particular civic group tick [as political] can ask him or herself, “How do people in a civic association connect or disconnect ‘caring about people’ and ‘caring about politics?’” (Eliasoph 2013: p. 99).

Luc Boltanski, in his inquiry into possible humanitarian reactions to witnessing suffering, also reflects on these two components of the political. First, he highlights the importance of ‘speaking out’ in front of an audience and hence attempting to influence larger publics as a possible form of political action. On the other hand, while he aims to reveal the rhetorical conditions of such speaking, he takes into account the complexity of roles that are evoked, differentiating between modes of speaking that include only the binary roles of sufferers and helpers, and those that expand to search for responsibilities, for culpabilities, and the guilty (Boltanski 1998). The notion of indignation considers the victim, the helper, and the prosecutor, and by highlighting the role of the latter and formulating critique towards them, the topic becomes inherently political. In contrast to indignation, sentimentality enhances a dyadic relationship between the victim and the helper(s), without considering their prosecutors. Without tracing the original source of suffering, and without assigning

responsibility for its occurrence, sentimentality is profoundly apolitical, according to Boltanski.

In our present article we attempt to elaborate the relationship between philanthropy/charity and politics in line with Eliasoph's and Boltanski's perspectives. As a major theoretical starting point, we inquire into the political character of the helping actions of volunteers and helping attitudes in the wider population by asking about interpretations – causal models and responsabilisations – built around the suffering that is addressed. On this level, a narrow understanding of relationships – that of sufferers and helpers – is considered to contrast with a more elaborate and enlarged models of actors who are entangled in a process of deepening or easing suffering. On the other hand, Eliasoph's emphasis on the large array of potential interconnections may inspire another direction in which to expand our theoretical assumptions.

### **Humanitarianism and securitization in the “Refugee Crisis”, Hungary, 2015**

As the introduction to this volume has already claimed, organized non-responsibility and securitization was a general response of European states to recent immigration, meaning that authorities were not able or willing to guarantee refugees protection in line with legal and moral standards (Pries, in this volume). Nevertheless, the differences between the reactions of various governments were also significant. The Hungarian government was one of the promoters of the European securitizing discourse<sup>2</sup>. Therefore, the large groups of refugees arriving to Hungary between the spring and the autumn of 2015 not only entered into a territorial space, but also into a political space already aligned along migration discourses. The securitization discourse proactively bolstered in the Hungarian public by the government and the Hungarian state, strongly dominated by the ruling party FIDESZ, allowed a very limited space for oppositional political formations to express their dissent and critique about issues related to immigration (Bernáth-Messing 2015, Nagy 2016). The monopoly of the Hungarian government and the Hungarian state over public discourses around migration has been, moreover, closely tied with attempts to monopolise anti-refugee identities and positions in these Hungarian public discourses, through identifying government policies and politicians with anti-refugee claims (while presenting oppositional political actors as pro-refugee). In this way the rhetorical space around migration not only offered the (symbolic and practical) support of refugees as a form of critique of the securitizing migration discourse, but also provided a straightforward terrain to express general political dissent with the Hungarian government.

Thus, when scrutinizing the relationship between philanthropy/charity/volunteering and politics, besides the usual issue of the politicization of charity outlined in the previous part of the paper (that is, expanding epistemic models of suffering beyond helper-recipient dyadic relations), we should formulate a hypothesis concerning an alternative process. The question may be formulated regarding the extent (and potential) to which politics becomes ‘charitised’; that is, to what extent pre-existing political positions (attitudes towards public actors, issues, and ideas) might imply (or hinder) a humanitarian framing of causes and events, and thus their perception as grounds for charity/philanthropy/volunteering.

Attitudes towards political parties, along with the mediating effect of the promotion or critique of securitization, might be just one – though highly significant – example of such processes. Attitudes and positions towards other actors, causes, events, ideas and ideologies that appear in Hungarian publicity/publicities might also influence and shape the everyday ideas and actions of actors, increasing (or decreasing) their willingness to provide humanitarian help to refugees.

In the current article, therefore, we inquire about the relationship of charity and politics with regard to helping refugees in Hungary in 2015 on two levels. First, we inquire about responsabilisation processes (that is, the abstract models that the actual helpers or everyday actors in the wider population put together when seeking causal interpretations of the suffering of refugees). We may label such processes the ‘politicization of charity’ for refugees. Second, we address alternative epistemic processes; that is, attitudes to and actions towards helping refugees as implied by positions related to public actors and public issues that we have called above the ‘charitization of politics’.

## **Research questions, methods and data – qualitative interviews**

We inquire into these relations using two types of empirical data. First, semi-structured qualitative interviews were conducted among volunteers working in the field in the respective period. With these interviews we aimed to unearth major narrative strategies that reflect how reasoning and interpretations about help-giving to refugees are intertwined with thinking about public actors and their responsibilities. Second, we rely on population-level data from a nationally representative survey intended to unravel forms of associations between attitudes towards public actors and attitudes towards civic help for refugees.

Regarding the interviews conducted between October 2015 and January 2016, a snowball sampling approach was applied based on pre-existing personal contacts within the field, as well as by approaching online social media groups. We aimed to achieve saturation by capturing the variability of respondents according to various socio-economic variables (gender, age, education, and occupation). As is usual in qualitative interviewing, obtaining statistical representativeness was not attempted; instead we aimed to grasp the institutional and ideological variability in the background of respondents’ activities. Table 1 illustrates the basic characteristics of the sample according to major socio-economic variables.

### **Ch3 Table 1: Respondents according to gender, age, education and occupation**

The background of the majority of the interviewees (25 of 32) involved is higher education. This is in line with general tendencies in volunteering and civic participation, and specifically those related to migrant solidarity activities (Hustinx

Cnaan & Handy 2010). Regarding occupational background, a large proportion of respondents worked in 'social occupations' (as social workers or social scientists), or in similar public service occupations in the fields of healthcare and education. Seven respondents were professionals with a university degree in another field. Eight respondents were owners of companies or CEOs. Five were self-employed (artists, or in IT). One respondent was a pensioner, and another a university student.

Interviews were recorded and transcribed by providing summaries of the interviews with verbatim transcriptions of the relevant extracts. The texts were coded and analyzed using Atlas.ti software. Initial codes were generated from theoretical assumptions and research questions, which were then refined through a coding process based on the theoretical apparatus of grounded theory. Also, ideal-typical speech types linking different codes into specific configurations at the level of interviews were identified using factor analysis implemented using SPSS software.

Regarding our qualitative data, we proceeded as follows. To reveal the abstract models built up of public actors and their responsibilities associated with the suffering of refugees we first described the major typical narratives related to three primary themes: motivations for helping (specifically, major goals and targets of action); then on a more general level, major types of ideologies, norms and ethical considerations. Moreover, narratives of experience gained through interactions between helpers and the helped were investigated to reveal how such helping practices and interactions incubate politicized interpretations.

Second, factor analysis as a means of content analysis was applied to quantitatively identify major configurations of codes that appear in volunteer interviews. This method allowed us to identify underlying patterns of narratives linked together on the level of individual interviews.

## **Volunteering to help refugees: Intentional goals and targets of action**

In line with classical works on volunteering and civic action, our research found evidence of such involvement being primarily action oriented. Interviewees were all preoccupied by the need to immediately and actively help refugees, as well as organize and orchestrate helping activities. A third focus, however, only recently emerging at the fore of scientific research, covered the sphere of interpretations in terms of assigning meaning to the actions and practices that were carried out. Concerning the narratives related to goals and targets of action, six main narrative types emerged from the interviews, as listed in Table 2.

Besides solid consent about the refugee-targeted activities of humanitarian relief (23 out of 32 interviewees mentioned this), the diversity of goals and targets shows that the interpretations and reinterpretations of the related actions were dominated by self-reflectivity, with a focus on the helping individual and Hungarian society. The positive role of volunteering and solidarity for individuals and Hungarian society, the shaping of public opinion through volunteering, and the expression of political

standpoints (related to internal Hungarian politics) were the major concerns in accounts and interpretations built around volunteering, while much less attention was given to the goals of empowerment and acts of recognition directed towards refugees.

### **Ch3 Table 2: Goals and targets of civic help for refugees**

In most cases, helping actions were linked to primary experiences of witnessing the arrival of refugees (usually perceived as masses, rarely as individuals). Those marooned at railway stations were in need: they were sick, starving and exhausted – the activities of volunteers were targeted primarily at easing their suffering, meeting their needs, and at organizing provisions; all these actions interpreted as preventing a humanitarian catastrophe.

I felt we had to do something with our bare hands. I felt that this was much more humane, it made volunteers become more involved. In terms of becoming involved emotionally, there is a big difference between cooking and throwing a piece of bread and some spreadable cheese in a plastic bag. I don't really resonate with these things, but I am sure it [emotional involvement] was part of it. And also, we thought that this [caring activity] is what dignity is. These people are hungry and thirsty, and maybe they can buy themselves junk food, but they are in a terrible condition and they deserve a proper meal.<sup>3</sup>

The desire to engage in helping practices that strengthen volunteering in Hungarian society was also one of the most frequent interpretations of the goals of action. Many interviewees strongly emphasized that solidarity towards refugees provided a unique opportunity to prove the significance of volunteering and the strength of Hungarian civil society.

This goal/effect of strengthening volunteering was often linked to the formulation of critiques towards the Hungarian state, its political actors and policies. According to these interpretations, visible help-giving was intended to draw the attention of the wider public to the insufficient functioning of the state, which was disregarding important tasks and shifting its responsibilities onto everyday actors.

The positive effects of volunteering included not only sending a message to the wider public, but emerged in the feeling of a shared experience for participants. Positive feelings and emotional benefits acquired through helping (related to socializing, self-actualization and meaningful purposes of action) are sometimes described by the scholarly literature as proof of the processes of individualization and the self-centered character of late-modern volunteering and philanthropy (Hustinx et al 2010). The content of interviews attests that these positive emotional gains helped volunteers to maintain their activities in a deeply hostile social environment that delegitimized solidarity towards refugees.

What was good about it? That we felt human, we looked at each other and we were birds of a feather. I established very serious relationships there, and what the media keep showing us, what they [the refugees] are like, I know that it was completely untrue, because when thousands were crowded in there, they accepted their situation with so much dignity. And when they realized that aid was not coming from the state, but from the people, they were very grateful.<sup>4</sup>

The above extract illustrates how narratives of personal emotional gain and benefits for public/civic life may become intertwined in the context of helping actions directed at refugees (such as cooking, food distribution, and caring for the sick).

Why is it worth helping? Maybe in order to be part of something bigger. This is what I feel now, in relation to the refugees (...) That something I consider important many people can contribute to. And it comes with a kind of a positive experience, which is difficult to find anywhere else. (...) It has a spiritual side to it, an extra level, which cannot be conflated with professional, family, or personal life, this is something that adds to it. And for that [positive experience] it need not be an individual action. It is spiritual, because many people have the same thing in mind.<sup>5</sup>

Some of the respondents emphasized the primary importance of the goal of influencing the public. In this context, helping work served as the basis for creating an alternative political standpoint, different from the government's, and validating and distributing the values of solidarity.

We agreed right from the beginning that we have a double goal: to help refugees operatively in however we can, and by doing so we also want to shape public discourse in Hungary. If we hadn't paid attention to this, it would have been a waste of our energies.<sup>6</sup>

The humanitarian action itself can be interpreted as explicit political action that reflects the disagreement of the speaker with the manipulatory political discourses that aimed to incite xenophobia among the Hungarian population. In the following extract, very little is said about the actual practices and circumstances of helping, but a lot more about the discourse of solidarity and openness that was constructed in opposition to the discourse of security and defense.

When thousands of refugees are arriving and the government is organizing a hate campaign financed by public money without aiming to solve anything, but only for the sake of regaining lost popularity – meaning, only for short-term political goals, this is equivalent to releasing a genie from a bottle that will have unforeseeable consequences, and in a situation like this, standing with the refugees and providing them with water and food, caressing the top of their heads, means taking a political stand.<sup>7</sup>

In this part we have presented one of the most important and most unexpected results of our research. Volunteers who helped refugees partly interpret their actions in relation to the recipients of help: to alleviating their inhumane conditions and suffering, and their goal of reducing such suffering (by offering food, medication, shelter and care giving). In their interpretations, on the other hand, respondents emphasized their intentions of signaling to Hungarian society and the public. That is, although helping actions were directed towards refugees, according to respondents' reflected aims and goals they were also targeted towards influencing public opinion, enlarging social solidarity, and strengthening the values of volunteering in Hungarian society.



## Normative reasoning, legitimizing ideologies

Reasons for offering charity are often framed in reference to norms and values. Such norms and values became explicit through narrative accounts of current injuries to the former and related efforts to restore them through civic activities. Thus, a dynamic relationship may evolve that links ideologies and concrete actions in two ways. On the one hand, civic action is legitimized by ideologies of compassion or solidarity; on the other, ideologies are validated and enforced by concrete actions of helping. In this part we introduce the normative reasoning identified in the discourse of civic helpers in Hungary with a focus on collective ideologies<sup>8</sup>. According to the inductive methodology of grounded theory, we can identify eight types of normative reasoning and reflected ideologies, as listed in Table 3.

### **Ch3 Table 3: Reflected ideologies (the legitimizing actions of solidarity mentioned by help providers)**

In accordance with other investigations (see Turnisky and Nowicka; Povrzanović-Frykman and Mäkelä in this volume) humanitarianism was the most often mentioned reason of volunteers and helpers in Hungary too. People using this frame claim that serving people in need is a universal human responsibility. The following quote illustrates how a respondent argued that compassion must be awarded irrespective of any concrete attribute of the helped persons. Thus, any distinction between worthy and unworthy people in need is illegitimate. Being universal also means that the humanitarian approach does not involve political considerations; it may be shared by people with different political positions. The interviewee hesitated when describing the long-term consequences of large immigration flows. Nevertheless, concerning the necessity of providing immediate help in an extraordinary situation, he was unambiguous:

When there is an earthquake and people are under the rubble, we don't ask whether they are good or bad people. We rescue people from beneath the rubble of a prison building in the same way as we rescue people from beneath the rubble of a hospital or a kindergarten. (...) There are moments in life when we do not ask this question. There is a person in front of you who has traveled across the sea, who is afraid, who doesn't really know what their future looks like. We don't ask them these kind of questions. We ask them if they are hungry or cold. (...) Later, we can decide how many people should receive refugee status, but that's another issue.<sup>9</sup>

Active citizenship is the second most relevant normative justification and is understood in many respects as a counterpart to humanitarianism. The main argument supporting political responsibility is not pity or compassion (although it does not usually negate this) but a commitment to the idea of democratic and open society which is currently being damaged by the criminalizing discourse that targets refugees. Charity action legitimized by political malaise does not stem only from an intellectual stance, but is strongly driven by negative emotions too. Feelings of shame were most often mentioned in the interviews:

Anger and shame were a big part of it. (...) And maybe most people were led to come here because here they could do something about it [the ‘crisis’] instead of staying home and complaining, and they had a community experience, of course. You can see that we are many, it made us visible, it is not only the refugees who were made visible.<sup>10</sup>

Political reasoning includes a desire for the restitution of civic nationhood: seeking to create a community of self-conscious and federating citizens who display through their activity an image of Hungary which is different from the official one. Collective pride was connected in this way to charitable action framed in national terms, as the following interview illustrates:

This is a real triumph in my eyes. We proved that we care for each other. The silent majority was supporting us. But what is indeed extraordinary is that solidarity and real philanthropic actions benefited people. Providers of help organized themselves, and – instead of the indifference of the professionals – turned with real love and care towards those arriving in the country. Those refugees who were lucky enough and were waiting in the past weeks at Köztársaság [*Republic*] Square and left the country from there will remember us Hungarians as kind people who offer support. We took food to the hungry, water to the thirsty, and brought medicine to heal infected wounds and clean clothes to replace old rags. And probably that’s the most important thing!<sup>11</sup>

The third normative reason was related to professional solidarities: related to the work of certain professionals, doctors, teachers and social workers. The following excerpt is taken from an interview with a doctor who speaks in these terms:

Being a doctor is quite easy if you look at it from this perspective: there is a vow which obliges us to help anyone who is need, meaning that providing help is self-understood: if it hurts, we give painkillers, if a person needs to be sent to hospital, that is what we do, or we bandage their leg. It was terribly easy. Whose side are the doctors taking? (...) I am more sensitive to these things, because in my family, I mean, being a refugee, I can identify very easily with being a refugee and I have this feeling of the need to protest against that system of values. I wanted to take a stand and show my colleagues and everyone else that this is what I think, and this is the right thing to do. Not just talking about it, but going out there, it’s difficult to argue against this, you go out and see children, then post a picture on Facebook of a child who could be your own child, feeling cold.<sup>12</sup>

The previous quote shows solidarity not only as a professional ideology but also how it can be linked to representations of familial relationships and responsibilities (parent-children roles), as well as to political responsibilities.

Two types of ideologies are built around similarities of exclusion experience of the helpers and the helped. First, personal migrant or minority identities, and the experience of individual exclusion from the ‘mainstream’ society might become narrated as ideologies behind helping. Second, collective and personal memory of historical trauma, the persecution of the Jews, the Holocaust, population resettlements after the Second World War, and refugee waves to and from Hungary in the 20<sup>th</sup>

century are all referred as evoking solidarity towards the refugees.

For me, to detach ourselves from the refugees, it is really awkward. I know it is not a general feeling of many, but I still find it strange. That Hungarians always weep about their history, that those fleeing in 56, and fleeing this and that dictatorship, and Hungarians living all over the world, they all have been just the same as these people.<sup>13</sup>

Christian edicts about love were present but not very relevant forms of normative framing in our interviews. Religious reasoning could be identified in the discourse of four respondents, three of whom are active members or informal leaders of Christian organizations which were previously devoted to helping other categories of people in need:

I belong to a Catholic community which usually provides help to poor people. Its core values are also those of the Bible, the practice of common prayer, and the brotherhood and friendship experienced through personal assistance. The Western European groups of the Sanct'Egidio Community focus on immigration issues and refugees; there is a movement called the People of Peace. When they [the refugees] showed up during summer in Budapest, we decided to enlarge our Wednesday walks and made visits which went beyond the areas frequented by homeless people and also included the train stations. What our community cares about is how to make people do good. 14

Giving donations was one of the ways that people supported refugees. Managers and entrepreneurs framed their donation-related activities by emphasizing their own responsibility related to their disposal of economic and social capital. The following statement was formulated by the owner of a company, well known for his earlier commitment to corporate social responsibility and promoting diversity in business. It shows how dilemmas about wider and more general goals related to public speech in receiving or transit societies are a relevant issue.

For us, the extent to which we should 'go public' was a real dilemma. There were two perspectives about this, but neither involved consideration of whether this [providing help] would damage us. We were afraid that someone might think that we were using it [our support] as a good opportunity for getting into the news. This would have gone against our intention of promoting philanthropy as a means of incentivizing other companies as well: We thought that we might create an incentive for other companies to help refugees and do so without keeping it a secret. This is why we decided to go public and say that we helped.<sup>15</sup>

After presenting the most important collective normative reasons for helping, we formulate two claims: First, that moral/humanitarian and political/civic reasoning primordially and simultaneously defined the ideological framework that accounted for the civic support of refugees in Hungary. Further norms and values such as professional and private solidarity or religious ideologies proved to be secondary, and not only less frequently encountered, but often linked indirectly to the primary frameworks. Second, findings from our empirical data question the contradiction between humanitarian and political reasoning often found in the literature. The many

examples shown above demonstrate the complementary character of these forms of reasoning, which relationship is further investigated in the following chapter.

## **The dynamising effect of helping interactions**

Actions and activities have a crucial role in volunteering. Philanthropic actions and activities are also narrated with an emphasis on the significance of encounters with refugees. What happened during these encounters and what effect they had beyond the concrete situations is the main concern of this section of the paper. Specifically, our question is how the narratives of interactions reflect the broader social-political context, and how they shape the public interpretation of aid-providing activities.

Personal facts are the most eloquent representations of individual encounters. Migrants' fates and life histories are presented as personal testimonies and are often juxtaposed directly or indirectly against political discourses of criminality and disorder. The representations of personal interactions often involve the affective and in many cases emotional reactions (empathy, compassion, love, shame) of the helpers, and are the main organizing principles of the narratives.

Emotions as well as personal facts open up new perspectives. Firstly, narratives of interactions may become powerful resources for validating normative reasoning or ideologies already existing prior to helping activities. Secondly, disclosure and refutation vis-à-vis stereotyping public discourses may occur through aid activities when a politics of enmification is deconstructed through personal interactions with people in need. Thus, helping interactions are represented to delegitimize securitization and criminalization narratives. Less frequent are narratives involving 'common activities' that include recognition, suggesting that volunteers also profited from helping, and narratives involving reflection on structural issues embedded in the relation of aid provider to aid receiver.

### **Ch 3 Table 4: Framing narratives of helping interactions**

Some of the volunteers contributed to helping through background activities, without meeting the recipients in person. Most of the helpers, however, sought out personal interaction. As the passage below shows, the migrants with whom helpers become acquainted provided reliable information which was lacking in media and official communication. Moreover, through positive representation migrants became the main references of a counter discourse.

I heard incredible stories from them during these two months. There was an Afghan couple who fled home as the last survivors: the Taliban destroyed the whole adult population of their village. After the bloodbath only six children were left alive – they adopted them all. This is how they started their journey towards Europe, on foot, travelling in the cars of people smugglers. They said that several people died next to them in a Bulgarian truck because they didn't have enough air in the loading compartment. Nobody cared about them: the smugglers see migrants as goods; they make bodies disappear during the journey. When they got here [into Hungary], I saw numbers on their arms –

they said that they had received these numbers at the border – it was most certainly easier to register refugees this way.<sup>16</sup>

Narratives of personal interactions confirmed not only the accomplishments of the recipients of help but also the speakers. Narratives reinforce the self-perception of the latter as humanists, good Christians, or good citizens. The following excerpt from an interview shows how personal proximity is used to win over fellow citizens who were previously afraid or suspicious of migrants. Indirectly, it also reports on the revelations of third persons that were acquired through personal interaction in the course of the aid activity. Moreover, it also shows how personal testimonies redefine public discourses:

There were always these tired and abused slogans about fierce-looking young men of military age. It is very easy to generate fear with these kind of messages, and of course, there are also terrorists among them (but by no means to a greater degree than among Hungarians, but this is just my opinion). And then we sat down next to four fierce-looking men with beards and we talked about what they had gone through and they told us their family tragedies. (...) It turned out that they had experienced severe trauma, told us they had been hanged, and shot at ... but this is not the point, but the fact that we had a conversation. We said we were hoping they wanted to study here, and we ended up having a very nice conversation, and then, in the end we asked whether we could pray with them and they said, sure, so we did and we tried to explain with our poor English what we were praying for and a fierce-looking military-aged young man started crying. It was a very emotional and personal moment. I always bring up this story when I am fed the scary fierce-looking young men stereotype, and I say yes, I have met such fierce-looking young men.<sup>17</sup>

The following speaker keeps the focus on supporting an alternative approach to refugees based on a personal encounter, and on accepting the helped others as fellow humans. In the Hungarian context refugees rarely appeared as active agents either in public discourse or in the everyday perceptions of individuals. Nevertheless, elements of symbolic empowerment are present in the narratives of shared activities.

When at Pope John Paul II Square I saw the families with their children I thought I would have to show this to my children! A couple of us from the community, but really, just a couple of us, packed up, did some shopping as well, we bought toys, my son had three balls: I said, 'bring the balls, maybe you will have friends to play with there, and you could give one of the balls to those children who have none, as you have three'. We ended up with an Afghan family with two boys – they understood at once what it was all about, they started playing instantly. Since then, Mark (my son) keeps saying that one of his best experiences was when he took the ball to the boy, he [the refugee child] didn't want to accept it, then later, eventually, he did and was very happy about it, and thanked us for it. The other story he keeps telling is how the ball flew over a flower bed and one of the Afghan boys went around the flower bed and did not step on it while attempting to get the ball back. He kept telling this story to people a lot, about how civilized the little boy was. He also sensed the difference between the propaganda about the refugees and the

people who did not match the stereotypes we kept hearing in the media.<sup>18</sup>

In conclusion, the narratives of the Hungarian volunteers show that interactions between help-givers and receivers may have great potential for creating new types of knowledge and perspective, even in the cases when the interactions between them were very short. These cases are important because they reveal the coupling of civic aid as performative experience and ideological or political claims as normative commitments that were already in focus prior to the migrant-related interaction. Moreover, narratives about interactions prove that the relationships are dynamic: personal encounters sometimes validate previously existing normative reasoning. In other cases, they reveal discrepancies between individual reality and the reality of the media and political discourses.

## **Co-occurring narratives of charity and politics. Content analysis with factor analysis**

Factor analysis was carried out on the database using respondents as sample elements, and variables derived from the coding conducted in the respective interviews.<sup>19</sup> Factor analysis enabled us to identify the major narrative patterns that link together the occurrence and frequency of specific narratives on the level of individuals.

Three major latent variables of perceptions of charity and perceptions of politics were identified (for factor loadings, see Table 5). A first mode of framing contains references to moral ideologies of universal helping and ideologies of reciprocity, as well as references to perceptions of sameness between helpers and the helped, based on universal roles and responsibilities (e.g. between family members). According to its universalizing framework built upon a decontextualized notion of humanity and humanness, this type of perception could be labeled ‘apolitical charity’.

A second major set of co-occurring narratives is made up of narratives of volunteering, targeting three different types of actions: emergency humanitarian action targeted towards refugees aimed at avoiding humanitarian disaster; the importance of the emotional and cognitive effects and benefits that helpers gained through volunteering; and the aim of affecting Hungarian society by popularizing volunteering. Also embedded in the narratives of helping interactions are critical disclosures and refutation of the securitizing discourse omnipresent in the Hungarian public.

### **Ch3 Table 5: Volunteer framings: Rotated factor loadings<sup>20</sup>**

A third type of framing links narratives of (political) revolt against the securitization discourse of the state (as targets of action) and narratives of volunteering as embedded in a political ideology that emphasizes an open and extensive critique of the government regarding the promotion and consequences of this discourse. This form of speech focuses mainly on the relationship of the speaker and helpers to Hungarian political actors, and may or may not be linked with talk about suffering and emergency. It is characterized by a primary concern with political actors in Hungary, sometimes in reference to ‘Western standards’ defined for Hungary.

The two latter narrative patterns reveal how interpretations built around charity activism instead of being sterile of politics may be deeply coupled with political ideas that relate to public actors or public causes. Moreover, our interview data also allows us to differentiate potential variation in the connections between politics and charity activism. The second type of narrative framing – involving critical disclosure and refutation of the securitizing discourse – shows how being involved in charity activities may lead to specific moments in which new knowledge – political critique – is born. These moments may be understood as part of processes that we call the ‘politicization of charity’. On the other hand, the third narrative configuration that links a political critique of the Hungarian government and revolt against its heavy securitization of the refugee crisis (while omitting concern for suffering) may not only involve just another form of political framing of charity activities but point to a possible reverse connection between charity and politics that we label the ‘charitization of politics’. In these processes charity activities may be built upon pre-existing political discourses and positions, whereby primarily political preoccupations are channeled into charity activities due to the absence of other terrains and arenas for political action.

## **Quantitative analysis of the population survey: research questions, data and methods**

The qualitative interviews allow us to identify and describe major narrative configurations that link the suffering of refugees and helping reactions with politicized interpretations in the context of doing and practicing help. The population survey, on the other hand, enables us to contextualize such civic help for refugees by focusing on interpretations and meanings adopted by the larger population, by people witnessing the arrival of refugees, as well as civic reactions involving helping.

We aimed to analyze political attitudes of two kinds: First, we wished to inquire into approval or disapproval of civic help for refugees as associated with general overall political positions. Due to the limitations of our data, we were able to analyze preferences towards Hungarian party political actors in terms of voting preferences. The association between voting preferences and helping attitudes may involve a dual relationship, hardly distinguishable based on synchronic survey data. Based on our assumption that the securitizing discourse endorsed by the government (prior to the actual arrival of the refugees) shaped everyday interpretations about refugees – including reactions of defense or helping – according to political preferences, we expected that symbolic support for the civic helping of refugees would be associated with voting preferences. Following this line of thinking, we assumed that party preferences are a relatively robust measure that unites voter evaluations of numerous policy fields – policies related to the refugee crisis being just one of them. Any association between voting preferences and helping attitudes, however, could result from reverse causality as well; namely, the fact that voting preferences are partly determined by attitudes towards the (civic) helping of refugees.

Second, apart from examining the influence of general voting preferences (reflecting respondents' overall positions in the Hungarian political arena of party politics), we also aimed to reveal how attitudes towards helping and charity activism are associated with more specific political attitudes: the respondents' evaluation of political reactions to the refugee crisis. In the research for the current paper, the evaluation of political reactions of Hungarian state actors was considered.

In line with the theoretical model suggested by Boltanski, we expect that political attitudes of critique or satisfaction with state actors' reactions to the crisis may indirectly mirror a possible enlargement of causal models beyond mere helper-helped dyadic relations.<sup>21</sup> Given the dominant securitization framing of the 2015 summer events by the Hungarian government, with the message of refusal for any responsibility for the refugees (reflected by the use of the terms 'economic-' or 'illegal migrants', and avoiding 'refugees' and 'asylum-seekers'), we formulated the hypothesis that increased (actual or symbolic) support for civic help for refugees would be associated with an increase in the critique of Hungarian state actors' migration politics. In this way we expected to find implicit corroboration that more positive attitudes towards civic help implied an elevated level of political critique. On the other hand, as we could see from our qualitative analysis, the causality between attitudes towards state reactions to the 'crisis' (e.g. towards its securitizing discourses) and helping attitudes may well be the result of the opposite processes: disapproval of state reactions might imply more involvement (actual practical involvement or symbolic, attitudinal involvement) with civic helping and charity activities for refugees.

The population survey was conducted in October 2015.<sup>22</sup> The target population was persons aged 18 or older, resident in Hungary, not living in an institution. 1003 individuals were interviewed and the weighted sample was representative of the target population according to gender, age (group), education and settlement type.

In the statistical analysis of the data we proceeded using the following steps: First, we constructed the measures required for the analysis. Regarding the attitudes towards civic help for refugees, one variable was deduced from the answers to several questions inquiring about respondents' level of agreement concerning moral reasoning for such civic activities. Concerning structural positions related to Hungarian party politics, one variable related to the actual preference of the respondent in a hypothetical national election was used. Regarding attitudes – critique or satisfaction – towards state actors's reactions to the 'refugee crisis', principal component analysis was used to derive a relevant measure.

Second, the linear association between support for helping and several structural background variables – among them position in the field of Hungarian party politics – were estimated using multivariate linear regression.

Third, the level of association between agreement with civic help and attitudes towards political actors's (the Hungarian state's) reactions to the crisis were measured using multivariate linear regression, filtering out the effect of potential socio-economic and attitudinal structural background variables. Such a measure of association provides information about the level of relative critique according to differing levels of support for civic help: it shows that a defined increase in support



for civic help is associated with a defined increase (decrease) in the critique of specific political actors's political reactions.

## **Attitudes towards civic help for refugees and state policies – constructing the measures**

Regarding attitudes towards civic help for refugees, six items (evaluated using a scale of 0 - 10) were used to construct one single variable (See Table 6). Two items representing moral reasoning in favour of helping were included: one measured universal moral commitment-based solidarity; the other support for humanitarian help as a public issue. Also, four items capturing justification for not helping refugees were included: the first based on welfare chauvinism, the second on loyalty to the government, the third questioning the suffering and neediness of refugees, and the last item arguing against provision of help based on the perceived threat. These six measures were aggregated into a single principal component that measures overall support (disapproval) for civic helping of refugees in terms of moral principles. (Explained variance was 60%. For factor loadings, see the Appendix).

### **Ch 3 Table 6: Moral reasoning supporting/reducing support for helping refugees – Sample averages, number of respondents and standard deviation**

An overall measure of critique or satisfaction with state actors' reactions was derived by principle component analysis based on attitudes towards three actors: the Hungarian police, the Hungarian prime minister and the government, and the Hungarian immigration authorities (see Table 7). The factor analysis created a standardised variable that measures overall satisfaction with the three state actors' reactions to the "refugee crisis". The explained variance was 78% (for factor loadings, see the Appendix).

### **Ch 3 Table 7: "How did the following actors fulfil their duties regarding problems related to migrants/refugees (using a scale of 0 - 10)?: Sample averages, number of respondents and standard deviation**

## **The relationship between politics and charity – attitudes of the population**

Regarding the level of symbolic support for civic help provided to refugees, two ordinary least-square linear regression models were run. In the first model (M1), the structural socio-economic variables of region, settlement size, gender, age category, employment status, economic position and education were included. In the second model (M2), we enlarged M1 by incorporating political party support variables.

In Table 8 we indicate the results of the model in the first four columns. Regarding the effect of socio-economic position, education had by far the strongest relationship with support for helping refugees: respondents without a higher education degree supported civic help for refugees less than respondents with higher education by 0.3-0.5 points.<sup>23</sup> Political party support, added in a second step to the model, was shown to have the second strongest relationship with support for civic help. After filtering out the effect of socio-economic structural variables, only radical right (Jobbik)

supporters did not show any significant difference from FIDESZ supporters regarding attitudes towards helping refugees. Supporters of the biggest left/liberal opposition party (MSZP) were more in favour of helping by 0.4 points, while smaller left/liberal opposition party supporters were 0.9 points more in favour of helping. Those who did not reveal their party preferences also differed significantly from FIDESZ supporters, being 0.3 points more positive about civic support for refugees.

Regarding the relationship between helping attitudes and critiquing state actors' reactions to the 'refugee crisis', results are summarized in the last four columns of Table 8. In the first model, the background structural variables of region, settlement size, gender, age-category, employment status, economic position and education (Model 3) were included. Second, in Model 4 the background variables of Model 3 were completed with party preferences to determine the association between helping attitudes and tendency to critique state actors' reactions, independent of party preference.

We can see from the last row of Table 8 that – after filtering out the effect of major structural variables – support was positively correlated with a critical attitude towards Hungarian state actors. A one-point increase in moral support for civic help for refugees (standardized variable) was associated with a 0.31 point decrease in satisfaction with state actors' reactions to the 'crisis'. As attitudes towards the reactions of the government and related state actors may be associated partly with overall attachment to the political elite governing the country, which is dominantly a single party (FIDESZ), party-preference was also included in the second step of the analysis. Although the strength of the association is thereby somewhat reduced – the coefficient shrinks from -0.31 to -0.25 – the association itself remains highly significant.

This coefficient accounts for the relationship between helping attitudes and the critique of state actors' reactions after filtering out the effect of position in terms of Hungarian national-levels politics. Thus, a theoretical model of political critique derived from perception of the suffering of others could be interpreted as the direct effect of helping attitudes on the emergence or lack of critique of political actors' reactions to the crisis. This is thus a quantified measure of the 'politicization of charity' (or more precisely, the politicization of symbolic support for charity) at the level of population attitudes. However, as the results of the qualitative analysis show, such association may also stem from the opposite relationship; that is, support for helping refugees as implied by the rejection of state actors' reactions to the crisis (e.g. securitization).

## **Summary and conclusions**

There is a general concern in the study of charity and volunteering that direct forms of help for people in need that are driven by emotions like compassion or pity privatize responsibilities and disregard structural causes of suffering. Our paper presents evidence that only partially confirms this general statement, thereby emphasizing the political potential of charity.

Furthermore, our findings point to a possible dynamic relationship between the two realms of benevolent civic action and politics. In line with Boltanski's and Eliasoph's models, we found that consideration of the suffering and neediness of others may increase awareness of political responsibilities, and thus stimulate the birth of political critique. This is what we call the *politicization of charity*. Beyond this claim, we also find the reverse dynamic. Certain political positions (in the present case, rejection of the government in general, as well as rejection of the securitization discourses endorsed by the Hungarian government) may result in civic helping. Thus, charity may become a modality of revolt and a means of acting against politics, thus an alternative form of public responsibility. This is what we call the *charitization of politics*.

The strong interconnections between charity involvement (actual practices and attitudes) and politics (concern for political actors and public causes) have been demonstrated using multiple methods. Interviews revealed that interpretations of charity activities targeted at refugees are significantly intertwined with political narratives, and accommodate a specific critique of public actors and causes. Quantitative data, on the other hand, demonstrates the strong association between (attitudinal) charity support and political positions among the wider population and on a structural level: instead of self-reflected accounts of such processes, the specificities of reflection on politics and public issues are shown through quantifiable associations. At this level of analysis, symbolic support for civic help was shown to be strongly related to general political positions in the arena of Hungarian party politics, as well as to more specific attitudes regarding state actors' reactions to the 'refugee crisis'. The validity of causalities proposed, however, being built upon cross-sectional synchronic data, needs to be developed further using longitudinal methods.

Our model, involving the dynamic relationship between charity and politics and implying the politicization of charity and the *charitization* of politics, offers a general lesson. This is namely a reinforcement of the phenomenological approach to the study of charity inspired by Nina Eliasoph and Luc Boltanski. According to this approach, charity can be understood only together with the interpretations that assign meaning to civic helping activities.

Beyond this finding, we note that the politicization of charity and the charitization of politics are to a large extent the consequences of a very particular political situation. This is characterized more precisely by the escalating hegemony of securitization. In a broader context, however, new forms of civic and political participation and an increase in issue-driven and civic participation also support the emergence of new forms and meanings of charity. Scholars who have investigated the social and political impact of civic support for refugees in Hungary have often detected this close relationship between charity and politics. Nevertheless, they have interpreted it in different ways. Some of them have emphasized that an avoidance of politics was considered by volunteers to be a condition of efficient help giving (Tóth – Kertész 2016), while others have criticized Hungarian volunteers because of their disregard for refugees in person and as political actors (Kallius, Monterescu, Rajaram 2016); only a few academics have recognized that volunteers and political activists are not necessarily different by virtue of their *motivation*, but rather in the fact that they may pursue different activities albeit pursuing similar goals (Kende 2016, Cantat 2017).

In the context of the current volume, this chapter emphasises the significance of seeing refugee crises and protection as a Janus-faced phenomenon. The introduction has already noted that the exceptionalism of the refugee movement in 2015 was mainly framed by its high mediatization-securitization content. This was responded to by the exceptional amplification of the reactions of civil society based on the shared and collective experience of European citizens seeing fleeing people in a seemingly unprecedented situation in their streets and railway stations. Along with earlier studies and several other contributions to this volume we confirm not only the degree of individual mobilisation and participation in humanitarian, charitable activities, but also that the causes and effects of this go far beyond the desire for immediate intervention: humanitarian activism was driven by political considerations (what we call the charitization of politics) while speaking out about responsibilities from a position of care and compassion involves a shift that others in this volume call subversive humanitarianism,<sup>24</sup> while we label it the politicisation of charity. Furthermore, besides the self-reflections of the charity actors themselves, we also analysed wider social support for solidarity within a securitizing and stigmatizing context: associations between political attitudes and attitudes towards charity based on population survey data reveal that humanitarian help unfolded in a broader social context in which the political critique of securitizing actors and policies and symbolic support for refugees were significantly interrelated.

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## Appendix

### Ch3 Appendix 1: Additional statistics regarding the factor analysis of volunteer narratives

### Ch 3 Appendix 2: Additional output for constructing measures for the population survey analysis

#### Ch 3 Appendix 3

#### Table 8: Attitudes to civic help for refugees and satisfaction/critique of political actors – linear regression models

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<sup>1</sup> On civil society's potential for political socialisation in Hungary, see Sik 2016.

<sup>2</sup> A xenophobic campaign against migrants started well before the refugees from the Middle East arrived in Hungary (Bernáth-Messing 2015, Szalai- Göbl 2016).

<sup>3</sup> Interview 2

<sup>4</sup> Interview 10

<sup>5</sup> Interview 26

<sup>6</sup> Interview 15

<sup>7</sup> Interview 15

<sup>8</sup> The micro-politics and self-positioning of civic helpers will be analyzed in a forthcoming paper; Feischmidt 2018

<sup>9</sup> Interview 6

<sup>10</sup> Interview 1

<sup>11</sup> Interview 30

<sup>12</sup> Interview 18

<sup>13</sup> Interview 8

<sup>14</sup> Interview 16

<sup>15</sup> Interview 20

<sup>16</sup> Interview 31

<sup>17</sup> Interview 14

<sup>18</sup> Interview 16

<sup>19</sup> We are grateful to Attila Papp for his methodological contribution to this part of the chapter.

<sup>20</sup> Extraction Method: Maximum Likelihood. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

<sup>21</sup> Critiques may be only loosely related to the construction of abstract causal models of human/social actors and to the allocation of responsibilities regarding the alleviation of suffering. While formulating a critique towards an actor necessarily implies the assumption of responsibility and agency assigned to the actor, the reverse might not hold true: when an actor assumes responsibility, both satisfaction and critique could be expressed depending on the perceived performance of the actor and expectations about their tasks. Also, when judging public actors, the alleviation of suffering – and provision of compassion and care towards sufferers – might not be the only aim and concern for witnesses of suffering. In the case of multiple and competing framings and discourses surrounding “the crisis”, several other perceived tasks may arise (in parallel to, or even contradicting the goal of alleviating suffering) that may influence the emergence of critique or satisfaction. Specifically, the securitization discourse dominant in the respective period implies the expectation not of supporting refugees but of defending against them. In the following analysis, therefore, we elaborate on the relationship between (actual or symbolic) support for civic help for refugees and the critique of specific public actors, keeping in mind the multiplicity of possible connections between framings of the problem, the allocation of responsibilities, and the formulation of critiques towards specific public actors.

<sup>22</sup> The questionnaire was part of the TARKI October 2016 Omnibus Survey.

<sup>23</sup> Respondents living in Western Transdanubia (in M2) and in the Northern Great Plain showed greater support for civic help than residents of Central Hungary. Respondents living in settlements with 2000-5000 inhabitants are more supportive of civic help than those in settlements with 20,000 or more

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inhabitants. Respondents aged 25-34 showed less support for civic help for refugees than respondents aged 65 or older. Gender, employment and economic position were not significantly associated with support for civic help.

<sup>24</sup> See Vandevoordt and Verschraegen in this volume